

In Love And War

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Summary: In a world where Xavier was born a woman, Charlotte, her ex-husband Magneto plots her destruction.

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Alara Rogers

You are not home.

I knew this, of course. I would not be here, laying an ambush for you, if you were. I saw you on the news, giving a speech, continuing to spout your collaborationist rhetoric about what a wonderful world it would be if mutants and humans could just get along. Your students must be there with you, protecting you from harsh reality in the form of the humans who'd kill you for claiming that mutants are people too. I assume the children-- the children you deprived of a father-- must be there as well, soaking up their mother's bright idiocies like radiant rays from a false sun.

It was the first time I'd actually seen you in years.

You are still beautiful.

But it makes no difference. You drew the battle lines; I am only following the script you wrote for me. And when you fall at my hand, you'll have only yourself to blame.

Seven years... it's been seven years since I was last in this house. My memories are suspect, retrieved as they are from behind the cloud you placed around them. But things are not as different as I'd

thought they'd be. Your home looks more lived-in than when it was simply you, and me, and two small children-- as rambunctious as they could be they could never truly fill this mansion, whereas the assortment of teenagers you have here now, warriors for your oh-so-noble Dream, have had more of an impact on the walls and floorboards and the clutter about the place. Otherwise, though, no differences.

In your office I find our wedding photograph. Oh, Charlotte, you fool-- you left this out where any of your students could see it? Where they undoubtedly have seen it? Where your children can look, and remind themselves of the face of their father, without the clouds you've undoubtedly put in their way?

What would you do if I removed my helmet in battle? What if your students were to see that their dread and demonized enemy... was the man you married, so long ago?

But then, I was never expected to remember, was I?

What did you tell the children, Charlotte? Do they think their father died? I know you wouldn't have told them the truth. Not after you went to such lengths to hide them from me, in my own mind.

I lift the picture. You still have it in the frame I made for you, filigreed iron intricately woven. We were younger then, you blonde and not gray and standing on two legs, walking, smiling. My bright and shining sun, in lacy white you weren't actually entitled to wear. But that never made a difference to you, did it? You cared for appearances, not honesty. Hide the fact that you came not a virgin to your wedding, from the eyes of all your friends. Hide the fact that you are a mutant, to the eyes of all the world.

Hide the fact that Magneto married you, fathered your children, from their eyes and the eyes of your students.

And my eyes, for as long as your barriers held.

My power crumples the metal frame without my consciously willing it.

In the picture I'm smiling uneasily, nervous in a sweltering tuxedo. I remember it was absurdly hot and humid that day, even to me with all my powers. Perhaps it was just anxiety. You had invited over a hundred people to the reception, milling about in the yard of your mansion, imposing themselves on me to ask what I did for a living. (Hunted Nazis and donated the bounties, living off my wife's fortune. But I couldn't say that.) You were gliding through the throng of your friends like the sun breaking through clouds, a smile and words for each of them, drifting further and further away from me. I didn't begrudge you-- weddings are for women, their day of glory, and if you had a hundred friends to invite then surely I'd be glad for you and let you invite them all. But I disliked crowds, especially crowds of people I didn't know. All my friends, such as they were, were back in Israel, none of them close enough to invite over the sea for my wedding. Daniel Shomron had always been more your friend than mine, and the same for Gabrielle, and I knew no one else here at all.

I saw you working the crowd, in your element, the sunlight shining in your bright golden hair, and felt like a dark star helplessly

orbiting your bright sun. And then you turned from where you stood, and looked at me. I heard your voice in my mind-- _//patience, love, another hour and we can slip away together//_ -- and the tenderness and excitement and frank desire, radiating from it, and then I remembered again why I'd married you, why I loved you so helplessly. The brightness you gave to those others was like moonlight, a pale reflection of how your sun shined for me.

I remember that day.

And I remember the day the sun darkened, when I returned at night to find our home in chaos. You, your spine shattered by an assassin's bullet, for Control had decided to make me pay for bringing the "wrong" Nazis to justice by striking at my wife and children, and I wasn't there, couldn't protect you, so you destroyed their minds like molten sunfire burning flesh to ash. And after, your sun burned dim and red. The bullet took from you walking and lovemaking and your innocence, and in the long run, our love, destroying us just as surely as you'd destroyed the assassins' minds.

I remember that day, too.

And I remember the day a year after, when night fell and the sun went out for me forever. When I told you what I would do, what must be done, for our people, and you raged at me. You were always too enamored of the animals, even after they'd struck at you, even after they'd proven they could not be trusted. You swore you'd stop me, and I swore I would not let you.

I remmeber all the days, now.

If you had begged for the sake of our love, perhaps you could have turned me aside from the path I must walk. I had that much weakness in me, then. Perhaps you could have seduced me back to your side, and the tame domestic life you wanted me to lead, until eventually the fire came again and consumed us all. But you didn't try, and your arguments of the mind were as naive and foolish as always. You'd _never_ swayed me with those, only with arguments of the heart-- and your heart was not for me, not any longer, not since my failure left you crippled.

I did not mean to strike you, to knock you from your chair. That was wrong, and cruel.

But it does not make what you did next any more forgivable.

It's taken seven long years, Charlotte, and one of them full of many hard battles with your X-Men, sensing you behind their eyes, "hearing" you guide them. But I remember it all, now.

Why did you let me live? You must have known I would eventually regain my memories, and even if I had not, you knew I would make war on your precious humans. You _knew_ the path I saw before me, the only way I saw to save our people. You knew I had sworn myself to the violent overthrow of their corrupt, petty governments, and to the rule by the worthy, by mutants, by me. (And you, if you would have stayed, if you had not driven me away. But you did.) You knew this, and I was in your power. You could have killed me, cored out my mind as you did to Control and his men.

Why didn't you?

Did you think it was a kindness to take my memories of you instead? To make me forget my children, my love, my new home? Cast me out into the world again as Magda did, adrift and alone, only this time without even the memories of my love to sustain me? Did you actually think you were doing me a favor?

Or did you know that what you did was far crueler than killing me could ever have been?

You'll pay, Charlotte. You took my children from me, and my home, and left me with nothing but my Cause. And so I will retaliate in kind.

When you come home, I will kill your students before you. I will slaughter them, and let the halls of your home run with their blood. Then I will tear your mansion apart by the steel beams and rivets that hold it together, leaving you as homeless and bereft as you left me, when you mind-controlled me into fleeing your home and forgetting that it was mine as well. Then I will take your children-- our children, that you took from me-- to my asteroid, and raise them to understand that you have taught them fairy tales and lies. I will teach them of the world as I see it, the real world, forged in blood and pain, so that they will be strong enough to survive when the fire comes.

But I'll leave you alive, my wife. It's no less than you did to me.

Come home, Charlotte Xavier, once called Charlotte Lehnsherr. Come home to your husband, and the death of all you hold dear.

Thus swears Magneto.

End
file.